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Official Records

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New York

President: Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Agenda item 8 *(continued)*

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Marc Forné Molné, Prime Minister of the Principality of Andorra.

Mr. Forné Molné (Andorra) (*spoke in Catalan; interpretation from French text furnished by the delegation*): In March 1995, just a few months after becoming head of Government of Andorra, I went to Copenhagen for the first of the major conferences of the United Nations in which my country was to participate. The 1993 Constitution, which enabled Andorra to be part of the United Nations and to be a full-fledged member of the international community, expressed in its preamble the will of my State to stand in solidarity with the great common causes of mankind, none of which is more urgent than the development of peoples.

When we meet at the United Nations, here in Geneva and in New York, amid the current prosperity of the countries of the West, we talk about poverty and the lack of opportunity in so much of the world, yet it seems that we do not understand what that means. Billions of people, in this world of civilization and technology, still do not have access to basic necessities of health, nutrition, education, social cohesion, democracy and respect for human rights. How blind we are in this new millennium, we who know only how to talk, compile statistics and express regret, without finding any solutions for the most disadvantaged.

As human beings we are capable of designing and building a better future, yet we are moving only very slowly towards eradicating the material and spiritual poverty of a large part of our planet. The contrast is even more striking at a time when economic prosperity calls for a more just sharing of resources. The liberal ideology triumphed in the last century, and I am a very firm advocate of the effectiveness of the motivation of a market economy, which leads to legitimate aspirations to progress. But if we want to be faithful to the principles of the 1948 Declaration, States cannot allow themselves to be relegated to the role of mere accountants observing the evolution of the market. Internally, the State must ensure positive effects for all its members; externally, it must see to it that globalization does not enrich some to the detriment of others, but rather, that the welfare of all increases.

It is easy to talk but hard to take action. When I talk about responsibility, I address myself to those who unscrupulously benefit corruptly from the solidarity of

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others with their peoples. I address myself to dictators, to psuedo-democrats, to autocrats who imprison in their own egotism the spirits of entire populations. I address myself also to those who unduly gain riches because of the poverty of their citizens and who deserve all the opprobrium we can heap upon them. These sorts of people exist in every State, rich or poor, North or South.

The solidarity to which I refer is that of the richest States towards the poorest: the famous commitment of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for official development assistance, which very few of us have fulfilled; the establishment of fair economic rules for the developing countries as well; cooperation in every social area, through the transfer of knowledge, expertise and experience; and the sharing of projects on the environment, truly a global issue.

Solidarity is not a privilege of the richest countries alone, as we have seen from the beneficial effects of South-South cooperation. All States are involved in the quest for solidarity and of responsibility leading to social development.

This is a summing up of what we tried to establish five years ago in Copenhagen by setting objectives and commitments for all States, which we have to analyse today. Andorra, from its modest platform as a small State, landlocked in the European valleys of the Pyrenees, is not trying to teach anyone a lesson. We have been making economic progress for the last five years. With our neighbours on the European continent, we have to face the challenge of ensuring our prosperity. At Copenhagen we focused on the drafting of a commitment that emphasizes the essential role of young people in efforts for development. Andorra proposed and drafted Commitment 4, paragraph (h), of the Declaration, to

> "Acknowledge and encourage the contribution of people of all age groups as equally and vitally important for the building of a harmonious society, and foster dialogue between generations in all parts of society".

This commitment was quite Andorran in tone, because it originated from a country with a large proportion of young people. It recognized the contribution of various age groups, particularly young people and the elderly, in achieving social integration objectives.

The rural exodus is something we are seeing in many developing States, creating large cities, uprooting traditionai families and alienating generations from each other so that they now have less contact. This creates a serious problem for social integration and also creates marginalization. This marginalization often leads to unemployment for the young, becoming a vicious circle. in Andorra, we are trying to build a cohesive policy for young people that fosters integration, strongly emphasizing education, knowledge of the languages and cultures of neighbouring countries and worldwide languages, and the creation of a framework for active citizenship on the part of young people. We are drawing up the first sociological study of Andorran young people, in order to effectively design our policy for youth.

As a result of the Copenhagen conference, the human being is again becoming the focus and centre of theories of development. We have pledged to put an end to poverty, to promote full and productive employment and to promote social integration in order to build stable, secure and just societies for all. In five years we have only just started. For Andorra's part, we have increased our voluntary contributions to the United Nations for development every year, and we are going to do so again.

The African continent is still suffering from AIDS, external indebtedness, armed conflict and the difficulties of consolidating the rule of law. Respect for human rights and democracy are not yet common currency in many parts of the world.

The international community must bring its influence to bear to ensure that human-centred societies — in which respect for others prevails and popular representatives are freely elected — become the norm. In many areas, the democratic process will give fresh vigour to civil society, which is the key element in formulating realistic social development policies.

Two weeks ago, Beijing+5 was held in New York in order to review the progress made towards the advancement of women since the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. Andorra took part in that Conference, and its sizeable delegation included Government representatives and non-governmental organizations. It became clear at Beijing+5 that women represent a key element of society in developing countries. Microcredit, which enables women in

developing societies to start up small businesses, is one example of a successful solution that gives women the means and the power to be self-sufficient.

It is clear that the development of poor countries cannot take place with the participation of women, or, for that matter, without that of any member of society, young or old. All of civil society must be involved. Leaders of the developing countries must ensure that there is good governance and no corruption, and governments of the world must create the proper financial and commercial framework for development.

In Seattle last year, the World Trade Organization meeting certainly made headlines. Many members of civil society and of non-governmental organizations gathered there to express their dissatisfaction with global trading systems that do not take account of social development objectives. The major international economic organizations must assess their role in this collective effort, and their member States must have the courage not to hide behind acronyms and to tackle difficult questions when necessary.

The people of Andorra stand in partnership with the cause of social development, which is very close to our hearts. It is their message that I have conveyed to the Assembly today. After Copenhagen, we can never again remain indifferent to the suffering of so much of humanity. We know what the problems are, and we believe that solutions can be found. All we need is the courage, over the next few decades, to eradicate the scourge of poverty which is so wounding the body of humanity.

The President: The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Majesty King Mswati III, head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland.

King Mswati III: I am delighted to participate in this special session to follow up on the World Summit for Social Development. Allow me to express my deep gratitude to the Government and people of Switzerland for the warm welcome, excellent arrangements and most generous hospitality they have extended to me and to my delegation since our arrival in this beautiful lakeside city of Geneva. I should also like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff at the United Nations for the efficient preparations for this very important special summit.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes this summit meeting to be of the highest priority for the United Nations, and our people are following the proceedings with great interest and high expectations.

The Copenhagen Summit laid the foundation for a new era of commitment by all Member States to address the social challenges that face us all, in a spirit of cooperation and global partnership.

We welcome the opportunity of this special session to review our progress, especially in regard to the 10 commitments, and to agree on ways in which we can accelerate the pace of action in key areas, identifying those issues that are threatening to undermine all our best efforts so far, for it is clear to all that we in the developing world are not yet experiencing the benefits that we talked about at Copenhagen and that we are in danger of missing out on the growth potential of the information technology sector as a result of the inequalities of globalization.

I wish to raise a number of issues associated with the aims of the Social Summit which are directly affecting our efforts in the Kingdom of Swaziland to meet the priority development objectives of our people.

The first is the question of official development assistance. Since Copenhagen, the Kingdom of Swaziland has experienced a major reduction in official development assistance flows, particularly in terms of bilateral support. While acknowledging those few developed countries that have already met the agreed target, I would urge others to fulfil their commitments and to maintain bilateral assistance for vital programmes.

Another issue concerns debt relief. The Kingdom of Swaziland fully supports the initiative to forgive debt in those countries most in need. But at the same time, we believe that those of us who have so far escaped the debt trap should be supported with concessional loan financing for worthwhile development projects to help us to sustain the progress we are making.

For our part, and despite resource constraints, the Kingdom of Swaziland has made substantial progress in a number of the key areas of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. We are continuing to place our people at the centre of all our national policies by involving them directly in the Kingdom's decision-making process. Indeed, all our national development priorities are driven by the wishes of the people

themselves, through a continuous process of consultation.

We rounded off the last century with the launch of the nation's development strategy, based on the people's recommendations, which lays down the priorities for Government action for the following 25 years. The document is perfectly in tune with the spirit and the letter of the Copenhagen commitments, and it is the basis for all support from our development partners.

Poverty alleviation, with particular emphasis on health and education, remains our priority for Government funding and action. We have also established a gender unit to oversee true progress in our objective of realizing the full potential of our women in development.

Job creation is at the centre of our development efforts, with the establishment of an investment promotion agency, and with legislation and incentives in place to help us to bring dignity and security into the lives of all too many of our people without work.

As victims of the worldwide trend of decreasing foreign direct investment, we need international support and partners in our efforts to invest in our own future by initiating large-scale projects in tourism, agribusiness, manufacturing industries and infrastructure.

My final point concerns the HIV/AIDS crisis. AIDS now represents the biggest threat to the economic and social development of the Kingdom of Swaziland, and its effects are now forcing us to divert funds from other development priorities in an attempt to limit its spread. Our analysis shows that without urgent action, we stand to lose up to 22 per cent of our population in the next 10 years, with a dramatic effect on our economy and on the social well-being of our people. We believe that words alone are meaningless without a true commitment from all Members to resolve this crisis.

Above all, there is a need for funding of education and care programmes for the developing world, as well as making medicines affordable and arranging the exchange of information and expertise. We Swazis have the will and the strategy to contain the disaster and, hopefully, to reverse the infection pattern, but we cannot manage this on our own. A strong statement from the special session on the HIV/AIDS crisis will certainly help; but most of all, we need direct and urgent action from all Member States.

One of the major adverse effects of the HIV/AIDS crisis is on the well-being of our children. As its negative influences have more and more of an impact on our daily lives, we have realized that our children are in danger of losing the moral values that include the sense of identity and discipline that makes them uniquely Swazi and that helps protect them from many of the dangers of the modern world. We hope to receive substantial international support for a new initiative to regain the values that guided parents to bring up their children in a responsible manner and that we hope will instil in our youth a sense of belief and pride.

The Kingdom of Swaziland believes that the commitments made at Copenhagen represent the best hope for improvement in social welfare standards around the world. Yet the disappointing lack of progress since then clearly indicates that a new approach is needed, with a much stronger commitment from all Member States in a spirit of willingness to truly address the priority issues. Words alone cannot help our people. Let Geneva 2000, above all, be the catalyst for action and not just another talk show. The whole world is watching, and our people expect and deserve results: we cannot afford to fail them.

The President: I thank the head of State of the Kingdom of Swaziland for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Mathias Sinamenye, Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

Mr. Sinamenye (Burundi) (*spoke in French*): I should like to start, on behalf of my delegation and on my own behalf, by congratulating Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election as President of the Assembly at this special session. I should also like to take this opportunity to thank the Swiss Government and the Canton of Geneva for having agreed to host this session, and to congratulate the organizers, who have made it possible for us to meet on the thorny subject of social development and who have made very high-quality documents available to us.

The report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Copenhagen Summit indicates to us that, despite some progress made in the effort to reduce poverty, promote employment and improve

social integration, many developing countries have encountered numerous constraints, both structural and due to present circumstances. Imbalances between the situation of the least developed countries and that of the rich countries have worsened, thus imperilling the follow-up to the commitments for solidarity and partnership assumed in Copenhagen. Africa in general, and the subregion of the Great Lakes in particular, is still encountering difficulties in ensuring economic development and in improving the social conditions of populations and communities. Some countries, including Burundi, which it is my honour to represent here, have over the last few years gone through situations of crisis and serious socio-political instability that have made poverty even worse, both in the urban and in the rural areas.

In my country the crisis has exacerbated a socio-economic situation that was already precarious, given the tremendous demographic pressure on arable land and the high level of illiteracy, not to mention the AIDS pandemic, which is affecting the active, educated population. Despite these difficulties, the Government of Burundi has made very serious efforts to implement the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development. Encouraging results have been achieved, in particular in the sectors of education and public health, where social indicators that had worsened significantly are returning slowly to where they stood before the crisis. Numerous actions have also been taken to rehabilitate the people affected, to promote the private sector and for the socio-economic promotion of women.

To break the cycle of violence, Burundi has committed itself to a peace process through internal dialogue and negotiations with armed groups and all the political and social forces of the country. These negotiations are taking place in Arusha, Tanzania, with the mediation of President Nelson Mandela, former head of State of the Republic of South Africa. These negotiations are now moving into a decisive phase, that of the signing of a peace agreement. The facilitation team is presently finalizing a draft of this agreement.

For the Government of Burundi, this agreement, if it is to be credible and lasting, should be aimed at putting an end to violence and impunity and at ensuring a consensus among all the inhabitants of Burundi on a new social contract. The Government of Burundi is determined to ensure that this peace process can progress, in particular by finding compromises acceptable to the various parties. In order to facilitate the adherence of all parties to the agreement, we would like the draft to be discussed soon by the main parties, because there still are important questions remaining on which a consensus is imperative, in particular the eradication of genocide, the electoral system and the transitional leadership.

After more than seven years of crisis, Burundi is ready to get back on track. To do this, it needs the encouragement and the support of the international community, in particular economic assistance to populations, support for democracy and good governance and assistance for reconstruction and economic rehabilitation.

This support, however, will be fruitful only if the entire Great Lakes subregion is stabilized, because it has become apparent that the various conflicts in this zone are interconnected and thus require regional solutions.

For its part, the people of Burundi are determined and committed to carry out a relentless struggle against poverty, misery and ignorance.

We have realistic programmes for peace and security for all, to create employment, to promote human rights, including gender equality, and for social integration. We will create and refine plans of action for the fulfilment of these programmes.

We fervently hope that we will succeed. But this hope would be in vain without active international solidarity and a sincere partnership between developed and developing countries. This conference is an excellent opportunity to move forward into the future.

The President: I thank the Vice-President of the Republic of Burundi.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Pascoal Manuel Mocumbi, Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique.

Mr. Mocumbi (Mozambique): Allow me to express, on behalf of the Government and the people of Mozambique, and indeed on my own behalf, my appreciation, Mr. President, for your initiative in convening this special session of the General Assembly on social development.

(*spoke in French*)

Our thanks also go to the United Nations Office at Geneva and the Swiss authorities for their warm welcome and hospitality. The city of Geneva yesterday evening surprised us with a wonderful, fairy-like firework display.

(*spoke in English*)

This special session, which takes places at the dawn of a new millennium, is of great importance for it will allow the United Nations Member States to take stock of and reflect on the progress achieved and the difficulties faced in the context of implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. It constitutes an excellent forum for an exchange of views on how to devise new and more effective strategies aimed at facing the challenges before us.

This gathering is also a landmark for my own country, as we just celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of our independence the day before yesterday. Since our independence, the social sector has always been a top priority of my Government's agenda. The five-year programme we implemented between 1995 and 1999, which reflected the main recommendations of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, resulted in good economic performance at the national level. Real economic growth has exceeded 8 per cent, with low inflation rates. Social sectors, including health, education, water supply and training, have seen progress. Although these encouraging developments can be seen as signs of a promising future for the Mozambican people, they do not constitute any indication that all the problems in the country have been overcome. Many more challenges still lie ahead.

Mozambique went through a difficult period early this year; torrential rains and cyclones resulted in the most devastating floods ever seen in southern Africa. This national disaster brought death, destruction and misery. The significant improvements achieved over the past five years in our effort to eradicate absolute poverty have been seriously jeopardized by these catastrophes. With the spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, we have seen it infect in Mozambique 700 to 800 people daily, particularly the young. Those challenges have been imposed on our Government as it attempts to bring the country back to the economic and social development pace of the past few years.

I would like to seize this opportunity to reiterate our appreciation, on behalf of the people and the Government of Mozambique, and express our sincere thanks for the generous support, solidarity and prompt response of the international community following our appeal for support for the flood victims.

The regional dimension of this catastrophe and the humanitarian situation caused in southern Africa bear clear testimony to the enormous challenges to international cooperation in disaster prevention, reduction and management. This calls for devising effective long-term and multisectoral mechanisms, strategies and programmes for disaster reduction to be implemented at the international, interregional, regional, subregional and national levels, in order to meet the challenges ahead.

In this regard, we are of the view that the rehabilitation programmes should support capacity-building for disaster reduction, thereby reducing socio-economic losses and advancing our poverty reduction agenda.

We strongly believe that the Copenhagen Programme of Action is an important instrument for the promotion of social development in order to make sure that the social benefits of global economic growth and scientific and technological progress are shared by all peoples of the world in an equitable manner.

As the Secretary-General stated yesterday, "We are all impoverished if the poor are denied opportunities to make a living."

The Copenhagen consensus reflects the growing awareness that the sustainability of social development at the global level depends on the reduction of the absolute poverty currently affecting about 1.2 billion human beings on earth.

Despite the efforts undertaken by Governments worldwide, we all know that the implementation of the Copenhagen decisions falls short of what we had committed ourselves to achieve. The vast majority of targets contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action have not been attained. Today the question is how to give concrete substance to the commitments undertaken in Copenhagen. Our peoples, with reason, doubt our seriousness when the decisions we have made as Governments do not have a direct and tangible impact on the quality of their lives. It is our view that all countries, both developing and developed, should leave rhetoric behind and embark on concrete actions such as the adoption of more viable and

inclusive economic programmes aimed at reducing poverty and eliminating absolute poverty.

We need to develop a new global partnership that necessarily involves advancing sustainable development strategies in which people are placed at the centre stage of development, through the provision of basic levels of human development to all peoples.

How do we move from those general principles, recognized by all of us, to practical actions? I do not have a conclusive answer to this question. But I would like to invite the Assembly to reflect on two aspects that appear fundamental to me.

First, there is a need to institutionalize dialogue among all social actors, including the private sector, with the objective of combating poverty. This would allow the poverty reduction agenda to be placed above all circumstantial political contingencies and interests, at the national as well as the international level. It would also provide a means of evaluating progress on the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action.

In our regional cooperation efforts, in the context of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), we envision a partnership based on a constructive dialogue between Governments, the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society at large. Ultimately, it would be a partnership that entails ownership over the entire development process. The creation of a social development body and the adoption of a regional plan of action bear clear testimony to our common determination to foster social development in the region.

Secondly, there is a need to ensure accountability vis-à-vis our political commitment. In this regard, it seems important to adopt at both national and international levels effective mechanisms that bind Governments in the implementation of these commitments. If we fail to do this, we run the likely risk of turning our commitments into repetitious declarations of principles without any meaningful social impact worldwide. It is our view that these issues are sufficiently important to deserve deeper reflection at the forthcoming Millennium Summit.

Our efforts to implement the Copenhagen commitments have been severely affected by the heavy burden of external debt and lack of financial resources. It is a well-known fact that the continuing external debt burden on developing countries, particularly on the least developed countries, hampers all their economic and social development efforts, because debt servicing deprives them of the financial resources needed for the development of infrastructure and for the creation of an enabling environment for economic growth and social development.

The external debt crisis is the major cause of the deterioration in the economic and social situation of the vast majority of developing countries such as ours. In fact, the persistence and deepening of the crisis is causing a deterioration in their economic and social position. We would like to add our voice to those of others who have, on many occasions, urged the Bretton Woods institutions to speed up the implementation of all viable initiatives leading to a coherent, consistent and durable solution to this problem, including the improved Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. There will be no social development if we fail to address this problem.

Financial resources are the basic precondition for the attainment of a harmonious and sustainable social development. A significant number of our development partners, who had committed themselves to allocating at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to social development, have frustrated our expectations by failing to reach that target. This has resulted in the increasing inability of developing countries, particularly in Africa, to undertake tangible social development programmes.

The eradication of absolute poverty is the backbone of my Government's five-year plan for 2000-2004, which incorporates all the relevant aspects of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. It is our strong conviction that social disparities and inequalities are the major source of political and social tension and conflict. The vast majority of conflicts we are witnessing around the globe today have their roots in social inequality and injustice. We are committed to accountability and transparency as two of the most effective ways of ensuring the rational allocation of our scarce resources in the best interests of our countries, including the promotion of social development and the elimination of social inequalities and disparities.

Let me conclude by suggesting that we conduct our deliberations at this special session so that all the objectives outlined in Copenhagen and reinforced at

this summit can be translated into tangible results. We should not spare any efforts in our fight against poverty and for harmonious social development. If we put our minds together and join hands, we will be well equipped for the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action. We need to adopt new partnership approaches while we strengthen the existing ones, if we are to succeed in our fight against poverty, and social inequalities and disparities. We all stand to gain if we succeed in doing this.

The President: I thank the Prime Minister of the Republic of Mozambique for his statement.

The Assembly will now hear a statement by His Excellency Mr. Emomali Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

President Rakhmonov (*spoke in Russian*): First of all I should like to express my gratitude to the Swiss Government for its hospitality. We are convinced that the excellent conditions that have been provided for us will facilitate a very productive session.

There is no doubt that an event of such magnitude will provide us with a unique opportunity to re-examine the most important problems related to social development in a globalized world and to determine and coordinate our efforts and actions to resolve the acute problems of sustainable social development at the beginning of the new millennium. This forum will undoubtedly become an important event for understanding the problems facing the international community in ensuring comprehensive and coordinated human development, poverty eradication and environmental protection and in improving the status of women, education and public health. It will have a much-needed impact on determining ways to solve such problems.

It is also significant that this session is being held in a new international environment of globalization. The integration processes that are taking place in the world certainly promote globalization and strengthen economic interdependence among States. At the same time, these processes constitute a threat to countries in development and with economies in transition because their companies are not able to participate equally in a competitive market. Their economies are becoming increasingly resource-oriented and their debts are growing.

An accelerated pace of privatization could also cause serious social instability during the initial stages. We believe, therefore, that these processes should be accompanied by reasonable and targeted social policies at both the national and international levels.

We have achieved our main goal in Tajikistan: national reconciliation and the establishment of peace. A number of political actions have been carried out aimed at building a democratic society, providing political stability and achieving social unity within our society. In Tajikistan today, as is the case in other countries of Eastern Europe, the Baltic and the Commonwealth of Independent States, the process of implementing the goals set by the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development will require a relatively long period of time. This is primarily due to the transition from a centrally planned economy to a market economy.

I wish to note with satisfaction that since June 1998, the Government has been successfully implementing a mid-term economic programme for the period 1998 to 2001, supported by the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and other influential international financial institutions. This programme is aimed basically at improving people's well-being and resolving other pressing problems, such as poverty eradication, decreasing unemployment, creating new jobs, social protection for vulnerable groups of the population and mobilizing additional external resources for social development, including a change in the structure of budget expenditure to increase the share of budget expenditure in the social sphere.

As a result of the measures undertaken by the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, we have succeeded in achieving macroeconomic stabilization. Gross domestic product since 1997 has been growing by approximately 5 per cent over the last few years. In virtually all industrial production sectors in our country, the rate of growth has been steady. Nonetheless, poverty alleviation remains one of the most important tasks facing our Government.

Difficulties in making the transition to a market economy and the impact of armed conflict, economic crisis, migration and other factors have contributed to the growth of poverty in our country. According to an assessment of poverty carried out jointly with the World Bank, 80 per cent of the population remains poor in terms of disposable income.

Within the framework of the decisions taken at the Copenhagen Summit, we drafted a preliminary document on a strategy for poverty eradication in the Republic of Tajikistan up to the year 2003. We fully realize that the problem of poverty is widespread, and it could be jointly resolved by attracting investment to human resources development, investing resources in increasing the economic productivity of the vulnerable groups of the population, increasing spending from the State budget for primary social needs, providing a social safety net for the population and decreasing gender inequality. In accordance with international norms, we have adopted a number of laws aimed at providing a social safety net for pensioners and vulnerable groups of the population in order to protect them from the negative social consequences of the transition period.

I should like in particular to note the role of women within the framework of the national policy for sustainable human development. Women make up 51 per cent of a population of 6 million in our country.

The problem of eliminating gender inequality, which is one of the most important conditions for sustainable human development, has become particularly urgent in our country. The recent civil war in Tajikistan and the severe consequences of the socio-economic crisis have been preventing the active participation of women in social development, impeding their access to social services and contributing to the growth of unemployment in Tajikistan, particularly among women.

Currently we are implementing the National Plan of Action for the Republic of Tajikistan on the Improvement of the Status of Women for 1998-2005, the programme on women's participation in the implementation of the State programme for reforming public education and a decree by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan on raising the status of women in society. These are aimed at increasing the role of women and making use of their potential in our society.

The achievement of sustainable economic growth requires priority attention to ensuring growth of employment and consideration of the human factor as a central component in the development process.

Difficulties in the transition period, consequences of the civil war, the dire economic situation and the constrained State budget have also contributed to a huge unemployed labour market in the country. Unemployment is concentrated among young people, those seeking employment for the first time and women in certain regions.

Nevertheless, the Government has undertaken a number of serious measures to provide jobs to the population and to prevent unemployment, particularly in rural areas.

For example, 75,000 hectares of land have been distributed among farmers. There is also a State programme for supporting private business in our country. We attach great importance to the development of education as the primary mechanism for solving economic, political and social problems in the country.

A number of laws have been adopted. The mid-term economic programme for 1998 to 2001 also contains provisions on humanization, democratization, the fundamental role of education and reforming the educational system in keeping with international standards.

Obviously, Tajikistan's problems, including its social problems, must be solved first of all by the Tajik people themselves. Nevertheless, in a situation of economic and political transformation and post-conflict rehabilitation in our country, we are entitled to count on the assistance and support of the international community.

Our social and economic situation has deteriorated even more because of unprecedented natural disasters that have afflicted Tajikistan in recent years. This year continuous drought destroyed a significant part of our cereal and wheat crops. We hope that our appeal to the wheat-producing countries and international organizations for humanitarian assistance in overcoming the consequences of this drought will be answered.

We would also like to hope that the resolution on extending international assistance for the realization of projects on the post-conflict rehabilitation of Tajikistan, which was adopted at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, will be implemented, unlike the declarations on international aid that were adopted at the international economic forums on Tajikistan held in recent years in Tokyo, Vienna and Paris.

The strategy of national economic recovery focuses primarily on the rehabilitation of the country,

the reintegration of returnees and ex-combatants into civil society and, most importantly, sustainable social development.

A number of projects for the post-conflict rehabilitation of our infrastructure — providing new jobs for demobilized soldiers and their families, reintegration of refugees, poverty alleviation and support in various social sectors — have been worked out in cooperation with international organizations such as the International Labour Organization and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

In order to carry out the important tasks and projects that I have mentioned, we optimistically count on the assistance and support of donor countries and international organizations.

I am convinced that we will be able to take effective measures and elaborate coordinated approaches towards the major objectives defined at the Copenhagen Summit, such as poverty eradication, increasing employment opportunities and social integration, as well as determining ways of expanding international cooperation that will promote sustainable human development in the twenty-first century.

The President: I thank the President of the Republic of Tajikistan for his statement.

I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development of Germany.

Mrs. Wieczorek-Zeul (Germany): The last but one speaker before me was the Prime Minister of Mozambique, and I wanted to say to him and to his people how much we all suffered with the victims of the floods in his country and how much we all commit ourselves in order that the country can recover and can be rebuilt. We feel and show solidarity with the people of Mozambique.

I associate myself fully with the statement made by the Portuguese Presidency of the European Union.

At the beginning of this century, we should bring to life the positive vision of "one world" foreseen by politicians that have made a great impression on me and my country, like Willy Brandt. However, as has been very openly stated in all the discussions I have heard at this conference, a large part of mankind is still refused access to the globalizing world. It is true that the global on-line society is growing at exponential rates, but 88 per cent of the world's Internet users live in industrial countries, and only 0.3 per cent in the poorest countries of the world. As the United Nations Development Programme has told us in its impressive last report, the three richest men in the world possess an amount of wealth exceeding the income of 600 million people in the developing countries, and the worldwide imbalance in income distribution has continued to grow over recent years. The average annual per capita income between 1990 and 1998 was negative in 50 countries, with only one of them being an industrial country. The marginalization of a part of mankind does not take place only between the North and the South, between industrialized and developing countries, however; the ruptures between the rich and the poor occur within regions and within countries themselves. The global poverty problem, thus, has aggravated problems; we realize these days that it is at the base of many global dangers, and it is at the base of many threats to peace.

We are meeting for the first time in the new century, and among the most important challenges we face in this new century is to answer these questions: how can we prevent unregulated market forces from determining the world's destiny, or at least a big part of the world's destiny? How can we give globalization a human face? How can we ensure that all countries of the world can benefit from the opportunities offered by globalization?

I sometimes have the impression that the challenges confronting us are similar to those that the sorcerer's apprentice had to master when he wanted to tame the spirits he had called forth. However, globalization is no magic and no natural occurrence — we can and we have to give it shape. We have to take responsibility.

In order to master this task, we have to develop global rules and regulations and strengthen international representative organizations, thus putting the forces of the market in their social and ecological place. It was our European experience in the nineteenth and twentieth century that it was in this way possible to develop social market economies. To put markets in a social framework and to try to shape them, however, we need strong international organizations, as I have said, because the existing mechanisms do not suffice to regulate transitional developments.

One important contribution to shaping globalization is respect for human rights and pursuing social minimum standards. In 1998 the International Labour Organization, and with it all its members, adopted the Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. The German Government is actively advocating adherence to these core labour standards. They include the right to freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining — the free and unhindered work of trade unions — the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in employment and jobs. The German Government considers these core labour standards for a social shaping of globalization to be of essential importance; they form an internationally recognized standard which is a benchmark for all countries and for all enterprises. And by the way, there is a growing understanding by the private sector that social dialogue fosters economic growth.

Such a comprehensive set of rules and regulations, valid for all world regions and all global players, can be achieved only if we can balance the interests of developing and industrialized countries. The industrial countries must make concessions within a fair package of solutions and must make their own contribution to sustainable social development. They must enable the developing countries to foster autonomous economic development, and they must actively contribute to all parts of the world being able to draw benefits from world trade. Only in such a fair deal will we be able to anchor social minimum standards internationally.

An important step in this direction is to overcome blatant and latent protectionism. Currently, the poorest developing countries have a share of only 0.5 per cent of world trade.

The recent report of the United Nations Development Programme on poverty shows that, for instance, the industrialized countries are spending some $350 billion to subsidize and protect their agricultural sector. This is about seven times the amount which we industrialized countries are spending for official development cooperation. The German Government therefore endorses a further opening of the industrialized countries' markets to products from developing countries; in particular, the poorest ones should get free access for essentially all goods. A liberalization of agricultural markets alone would give the developing countries additional income of some $40 billion; this is something we should all work towards.

Another important contribution is the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. A total of $70 billion has been freed for this debt relief Initiative, and we hope that by the end of this year 20 countries will be profiting from it. We call also for more rapid decisions on this debt relief, because 36 countries are supposed to profit from it.

More and more HIPC countries are furnishing proof of good governance, not only in economic and financial terms, but also in social terms. Discussing policies with non-governmental organizations is important for a participatory civil society. It is also good to know that representatives of civil society are an integral part of the delegations of quite a number of countries participating in this special session — including my own country.

I think that one of the major advantages of the debt relief Initiative is that it has helped in instituting change. We must ensure that changes are made in the structural adjustment programmes of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), because in future the IMF, in its proposals, will have to respect the poverty-reduction strategy of the country in question. The HIPC Initiative means an easing of the debt burden for millions of people — a burden which until now has hampered their countries' endeavours towards development and peace.

Germany, my country, supports the Programme of Action agreed upon at Copenhagen. But we do not only take part in the important discussion process; we act. This year Germany will provide an additional amount of 108 million German marks to support social services in our partner countries. All in all, we will contribute 380 million German marks in the year 2000 to relevant projects in developing countries, especially in the field of health, to combat HIV/AIDS and to fund basic education.

In this respect, we are specifically interested in supporting girls and women. To support them and give them access to education is not only a necessity for reasons of gender equality and democracy, but is important in itself. It is clear that such action is the most important investment for developing countries, indeed, for all our countries.

Achieving international development targets warrants a global anti-poverty campaign and a constant, ongoing commitment by political leaders worldwide. Our Government will actively contribute to such a campaign, or even to a pact, since this is the only way of achieving the goal of reducing by half the percentage of people living in abject poverty.

Only if we can agree to act jointly to enable people everywhere to live a life free of fear and misery, a life in human dignity, a life in which they can make decisions for themselves and not just suffer and bear their situation — only then can we hope to achieve, hopefully in this century that has just begun, the vision of "One World". We must establish a new foundation for social justice and peace for all, and I hope that we can actively contribute to it.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Jan Trøjborg, Minister for Development Cooperation of Denmark.

Mr. Trøjborg (Denmark): What emerged five years ago at the World Summit on Social Development I will immodestly call the "Copenhagen consensus". The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action embody this consensus. They form the manifesto of a new development paradigm, based on a more balanced view of the relationship between state and market and of the interlinkage between economic growth and social justice.

After Copenhagen, development can no longer be reduced to economic growth and macroeconomic stability. The Copenhagen consensus is slowly replacing the "Washington consensus", with its emphasis on trickle-down, deregulation and liberalization as the ultimate answer to poverty reduction, employment generation and social integration.

The ultra-liberal recipe proved no cure. We should not question the importance of the free market, of economic stability and sustained growth. But there is no law of nature ensuring that poverty and misery will disappear as a result.

A vibrant market economy is the engine of long-term sustainable development. Market forces must be guided to maximize welfare benefits and avoid social distress. Economic growth must go in hand in hand with the full recognition of collective labour rights. Respect for the environment and investment in education for all is a fundamental prerequisite in all aspects of development. Markets must serve human beings.

The 10 commitments we agreed upon five years ago set social development as the main priority in our development efforts. This gave us a yardstick against which we can monitor progress in achieving our three main goals: to abolish human misery fostered by poverty; to combat the hopelessness of unemployment; and to redress the grievances of the socially excluded.

The aim is "a society for all".

In some areas, progress has been made. In others there have been setbacks. Much remains to be done.

In Copenhagen we promised to eradicate absolute poverty. Five years later, the number of poor people in the world is the same. We have not made major progress in the fight against poverty, and the testimony to our failure is overwhelming: 1.2 billion human beings have to cope on less than a dollar a day. Yet we promised these people real, tangible progress.

Yes, setbacks in the fight against poverty can sometimes be explained by factors beyond the control of any individual country — a natural disaster, an international financial crisis, a serious epidemic. And yet, even in those cases better preparation and more responsible behaviour can often make a huge difference.

The AIDS epidemic is a human tragedy and a social disaster that no one country can cope with alone. But national Governments have often played down the problem for too long, not having the courage to face it openly and thereby contributing to a conspiracy of silence. The international community has far too often neglected the global nature of the problem.

Lack of social progress is most often due to failing political determination. Let us therefore remind ourselves that the Social Summit bestowed on decision makers a clear responsibility to create a favourable environment for viable long-term social development.

Conflict forms part of change. But the peaceful settlement of conflicts is the basis of social progress.

There can be no sustainable social development without transparent administration and control of corruption, nor without human rights, democracy, the rule of law, good governance and freedom of

expression. Everyone has a right to live without fear. We need societies where every single individual — regardless of social status, gender, disability or ethnic or religious background — is empowered to influence his or her living conditions for a better future.

The international community must assist developing countries that make an effort to combat poverty. It is a moral and political obligation, and it is also in our long-term self-interest. Globalization must be given a human face in the years to come.

The globalization of production, trade and investment brings new challenges but also new opportunities, even for the most vulnerable States.

The international community must help ensure that the gains of globalization are more evenly spread. We must relieve the poorest highly indebted countries of a socially crippling debt. Foreign investments in developing countries must be promoted. We must renew our efforts to secure proper integration of developing countries into the global trade system. We must tear down the trade barriers that impede goods from the least developed countries from reaching our markets. We must assist developing countries in building up their capacity and their knowledge of the international trade rules. Furthermore, it is essential that the international donor community live up to the 0.7 per cent target.

Improved market access, debt relief and development aid are complementary measures: we must use them simultaneously to help weak countries gradually integrate into the world economy.

In Copenhagen we agreed on the blueprint to create a stable foundation for social development in a globalized world. Today, five years later, we are in a much better economic position to achieve that.

We do not want to go down in history as a generation that turned its back on the poor.

The President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Tunca Toskay, Minister of State of Turkey.

Mr. Toskay (Turkey): Mr. President, at the outset, I would like to congratulate you on your chairing of this important special session of the General Assembly. I also wish to express my appreciation to the Secretary-General and to all those who have contributed to the work which we all hope will help to achieve better social standards for humanity. Lastly, I take this opportunity to thank the Swiss Government for hosting this special session.

Turkey aligns itself with the statement of the European Union, delivered by the Portuguese Presidency. I would also like to express our national views on the implementation of the commitments of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995.

Globalization, which extended its impact on the whole world in the 1990s, is evolving in a rather complex manner in terms of its economic, political and cultural outcomes. Besides the advantages it offers, globalization also carries some risks and challenges, which vary in extent from one country to another. Globalization may bring about instability and adverse developments. Depending on the volatility of international capital flows, developing countries become particularly vulnerable to crises unfolding outside their borders. Opportunities provided by globalization and technology boost welfare levels of some countries on the one hand, while other countries, which are deprived of the knowledge, capital, technology and qualified manpower needed to capitalize on this global process, are becoming poorer and poorer.

The Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted at the end of the Copenhagen Summit, which placed social development on the global agenda, have established new guidelines of economic, social and cultural development policies for national Governments. Strategies to eradicate poverty, to generate employment and to improve social integration require long-term structural transformation rather than short-term solutions.

In the past five years Turkey has endeavoured to implement economic and social policies in line with the Programme of Action. High inflation and a rapid rise in the public sector deficit have led to macroeconomic instability in Turkey. This environment has narrowed the Government's capacity to implement policies aimed at ensuring social welfare.

In spite of all these difficulties, significant steps were taken to reduce poverty and unemployment, thereby ensuring social integration. With a view to enhancing the level of education in Turkey, the duration of compulsory primary education was increased from five years to eight years in 1997. More

funds were allocated to the national education system in order to establish the infrastructure required by this process and to improve education technology.

Social assistance programmes for the poor and for those who are not covered by any social insurance schemes were increased. The portion of the population covered by social security programmes rose to 91 per cent, and 86 per cent of the total population are registered with health insurance schemes. The legal framework for the creation of unemployment insurance was introduced in 1999.

In an effort to eliminate disparities in regional development, legislation aimed at promoting special investments and increasing employment in underdeveloped regions while providing tax exemptions and exceptions was put into effect. The tax burden on wage earners and the self-employed was reduced markedly, and their living standards were increased accordingly.

Efforts aimed at protecting working children continued, and the International Labour Organization Convention 138, relating to minimum employment age, was ratified by the Turkish Parliament in 1998. Convention 182, on an urgent action plan for the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour, is in the ratification process.

In order to prevent violence in families, the Law on Protection of Families was enacted in 1998. As a follow-up of the Beijing and Cairo conferences, a National Strategic Plan and an Action Plan designed to improve women's health were developed. A Disabled Persons Department was established in 1997 to undertake efforts to integrate disabled persons into social life and to improve their quality of life. I should also add that we were able to achieve some of these goals despite the unfortunate occurrence of two devastating earthquakes, which obviously limited our capacity to allocate more funds for social development.

Turkey considers that the following measures are essential in order to accomplish social development: achieving macroeconomic stability, the elimination of poverty, the elimination of disparities in the distribution of income, increasing employment through productive investments; increasing efficiency of social-protection programmes; providing solutions to education, health, nutrition and shelter problems; ensuring harmony between economic policies and social policies; equipping people with skills required by the information economy; and furthering cooperation between public-sector, private-sector and non-governmental organizations.

We believe these goals are vital for peace and social stability on our planet and for the expansion of prosperity at the national and international level throughout the world. The spirit of cooperation and solidarity among countries is the key factor for the success of our efforts aimed at promoting sustainable development for all humankind. Turkey will continue to fulfil its commitments to contribute to the achievement of the lofty goals of the Copenhagen Summit.

The President: I give the floor to His Highness Sayyid Shabib bin Taimur Al-Said, Special Adviser for Environmental Affairs to His Majesty the Sultan of Oman.

Mr. Al-Said (Oman): It is a great honour for me to represent His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, Sultan of Oman, in participating in this event and to convey His Majesty's warm greetings and sincere wishes to this forum at the commencement of the third millennium, which brings with it hopes and aspirations for a better future for the people of the world.

It pleases me to offer my heartiest congratulations to you, Sir, on your election to the presidency of this session, which we are sure will be brought to a successful conclusion.

It is indeed my pleasure to address the Assembly today on this occasion, to consider the progress achieved by my country in implementing the outcome of the Copenhagen Declaration and the Programme of Action agreed at the World Summit for Social Development. Many changes have occurred since; in particular, the progressive globalization of the world economy has been the most prominent feature of the last three decades. We therefore thank the United Nations for taking the initiative of organizing this session to consider the global progress made by the world community and various countries in the field of social development since the Summit, and to put forth new recommendations and objectives.

The importance of this session lies in the fact that it will discuss the advances made in previous years towards achieving social development for all, with special emphasis on the new conflicts and constraints now appearing on the horizon. Among these are, of

course, the problems relating to the mechanism of operating the world economy and establishing global interaction and relationships. In the case of developing countries, such conflicts and constraints are of special concern, with the goal of ensuring that these countries are not marginalized.

Based on the international consensus on the importance of social development, on one hand, and the priority given by my Government to a sustainable development, on the other, the Sultanate of Oman has, since its modern renaissance in 1970, under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said, launched a comprehensive programme to achieve sustainable development. Indeed, we are among those developing countries that have given the social sector their utmost concern since the 1970s. The Sultanate since that time has made a strong effort to make the Omani individual the paramount goal of Oman's development plan, and this commitment has been firmly endorsed and closely followed through on by the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan and his Government. They have spared no effort or resources in protecting our community from poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. The Government has also made great strides in the integration of women, so that they can participate and share in all aspects of the development of Oman.

It was very timely for the Sultanate of Oman that the 1995 Copenhagen Summit for Social Development coincided with the first stage of establishing the future vision of the Omani economy through the Oman 2020 programme. Our vision for the future is based on several principles, the most important of which is developing human resources so as to enable Omani citizens to effectively participate with all their energy in preparing Oman for the millennium.

Based on the guidelines in numerous fields of the Summit held in Copenhagen, the Sultanate of Oman has made great strides in the field of social development. Highlights include advances in basic educational-training services, health care, productive work opportunities and the provision of an adequate habitat for our population. We also take pride in the decrease of the infant mortality rate from 250 per 1,000 births in the 1970s to 18 per 1,000, as was recently reported by the World Health Organization.

The Secretariat of this session has been provided with a comprehensive regional report on social development in the Sultanate, which contains further details on such achievements.

Once more, the convening of this special session of the General Assembly as a follow-up to the Summit also coincides with the preparation of our sixth five-year plan. No doubt we will again benefit from the discussions, deliberations and recommendations of this session. Our commitment to participating underscores our solidarity with the world community in respect of the recommendations made at the various international conferences in this field.

Attendance at the various conferences has played a major role in the Sultanate's efforts to effectively institute legislative policies to enhance human development in the Sultanate, and the conference deliberations have shed light on deficiencies, giving us the opportunity to eradicate them.

Before concluding, I would like to add the voice of my country and its representatives to the voice of millions living in poverty around the world who are deprived of the basic necessities of an acceptable standard of living. I sincerely hope that this session will result in a concerted effort and cooperation involving all countries in order to achieve sustainable development for those in need, which will in turn help us move towards a just and peaceful world.

The Government of the Sultanate of Oman, from this platform, first calls upon the industrial and developed nations to provide assistance for those countries suffering from such problems. Such assistance would lead to a stable, social, economic and political order which will serve the interests of both developed and developing countries. Further, we call upon industrial and developed countries to avoid discrimination when offering such assistance, whether such discrimination is based on political, economic or any other considerations.

We believe without any doubt that our world today has, in an unprecedented manner, become a merging entity. My country believes in the need for international cooperation in all fields, between North and South on the one hand, and within the southern hemisphere on the other. In this way we will achieve the objective of a secure and peaceful international community, which was the ultimate goal of the founders of the United Nations.

I thank the Assembly for allowing me this opportunity to express the thoughts and wishes of my country and its representatives.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency The Honourable Siti Zaharah Sulaiman, Minister of National Unity and Social Development of Malaysia.

Ms. Sulaiman (Malaysia): Malaysia congratulates you, Sir, on your election as President of this United Nations special session on the World Summit for Social Development and beyond. This special session is of great importance to all of us. It is our earnest hope that we will be able to attain a new plateau of understanding and cooperation in addressing social development issues, which are of interest and concern to us all.

The end of the cold war and the advent of new technologies and modes of communication have given us new hope and a window of opportunity to streamline and focus our minds, efforts and resources on meeting the needs of social development for our peoples. We had high hopes that with the dividends of peace, we would be able to fully eradicate poverty and ameliorate the social well-being of peoples. Poverty affects one person in every five in the world, mainly in developing countries and mostly women. We have not forgotten that those mired in poverty are the marginalized groups that include the disabled and the dispossessed. No country in the world can afford to ignore the human potential and capacity of everyone for the full and equal development of their societies. Experiences of past decades certainly bear testimony in this regard.

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, was the most significant international endeavour to forge a global consensus and commitment to address poverty eradication. Our leaders, especially the Prime Minister of Malaysia, have pledged to support the decisions and programmes agreed to at Copenhagen in order to eradicate poverty through national actions as an ethical, social and economic imperative of mankind.

This timely special session on the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development to review and appraise the implementation of the recommendations of the Summit holds us accountable for the commitments made earlier. Its theme, "achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", reaffirms our commitment to address social progress, social justice, the betterment of the human condition and social integration.

Globalization has made us more aware of how interconnected we are with respect to challenges in social development. It has accelerated with the rapid development of transportation and communications, and increasing accessibility has also facilitated the movement of capital, goods, people and ideas across borders.

Multiracial and multifaceted nations like Malaysia all share the same hopes and fears regarding the human condition. Globalization must be addressed comprehensively and diligently to create conditions conducive to income equalization via the fair distribution of wealth. It has inevitably brought about higher expectations among our people regarding the role of the United Nations as a forum to address globalization and its consequences for societies and in determining common ground for joint actions on common global concerns and problems.

Ironically, at the beginning of this new millennium, poverty and income inequality still remain our greatest challenges. Reality has shown that we have yet to adequately meet needs for decent standards of living, food, housing, literacy and education, health and employment for our societies. More than 1 billion people still live in extreme poverty. More than 150 million children are unable to go to school. At least 50 million children are mentally or physically impaired because of inadequate nutrition. The population of the world is growing at the rate of about 80 million a year. The income gap between the rich and the poor is widening. Less than a quarter of the world's population consumes three quarters of its raw materials. Social violence against minorities, women and children continues unabated all over the world. The scourges of drugs, transnational crime and killer diseases such as HIV/AIDS do not stop at borders and are spreading rapidly. The incidence of teenagers committing crimes, from petty theft and vandalism to gangsterism, rape and firearm possession, is on the increase. In this context, we should all reflect on the issue facing us: whether the benefits of globalization can offset these equally pertinent social issues, since these challenges are beyond the capacity of any one State to meet on its own.

Yet it is in the face of these challenges that we meet to sustain the dialogue and cooperation to create

an enabling environment for sustainable growth for productive employment, to tailor appropriate programmes to meet the needs of the target groups within the mainstream of social development and, by doing so, to reduce and eventually eradicate poverty.

In Malaysia, we have had in place a well-established policy to eradicate poverty since 1971. Subsequent national development plans have maintained their focus on this goal with time-bound targets, specific strategies and particular target groups. The identified target groups are mainstreamed by affording them access to microcredit and low-cost housing and training for gainful employment. Though these programmes were somewhat affected when Malaysia experienced an economic contraction in the middle of 1997, we have rebounded and managed to overcome, under the untiring stewardship of our leaders, strong democratic governance, solid economic fundamentals and growth. We are also constantly upgrading our human resource development for labour flexibility and promoting employment opportunities essential for social cohesion and protection.

Malaysia, however, is aware that addressing social development issues calls for greater cooperation at all levels and has consistently attempted to involve all related national agencies, regional and international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

Malaysia associated itself fully with the concern of developing countries, particularly the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and the Association of South-East Asian Nations on social development issues.

In this century, while the role of international, regional and non-governmental organizations is pertinent to complement and supplement the national Government's efforts to address social development issues, the State remains the primary actor in ensuring the success of social programmes for development. Only States can effectively institute measures to realize the goals of the global programme. The global Programme of Action can succeed only if States honour their commitment to concerted localization of the global aspirations.

Malaysia has learned a powerful lesson: attitude and not aptitude determines your altitude. As we share these lessons with friends, we renew our determination here to address and resolve these issues. We remain ready to cooperate with all to meet the aspirations of our people to social well-being and security, and my delegation looks forward to working with all representatives in the deliberations to address the issues before us.

The President: I call on His Excellency The Honourable Algernon Allen, Minister for Housing and Social Development of the Bahamas.

Mr. Allen (Bahamas): It is indeed an honour and a privilege for me to address this special session of the General Assembly on the World Summit for Social Development and beyond, as nations of the world gather to continue man's noble quest to bring into being a real order of justice. At the outset, my delegation would wish to join others in congratulating you, Mr. President, on your election to preside over this special session of the United Nations devoted to a review of the follow-up to the 1995 World Summit for Social Development. We are confident that, given your wisdom and diplomacy, you will guide this singularly important conference to a successful outcome.

I bring this special session greetings and best wishes from the Governor-General, the Prime Minister, the Government and the people of the Commonwealth of the Bahamas. My delegation would also wish to express its appreciation to the Government of Switzerland for its offer to host this twenty-fourth special session and for the excellent arrangements that have been put in place for this gathering in this beautiful city of Geneva.

The Bahamas is an archipelago of 700 islands and keys covering approximately 80,000 square miles, or 215,000 square kilometres, in the Atlantic Ocean. The archipelagic nature of the geography of my country poses special and inordinate demands for the replication of public resources.

At the recently concluded Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in South Africa, heads of Government noted the need to seize the opportunities opened up by globalization while minimizing its risks. Above all, they stressed the importance of people-centred development. People-centred development must, of necessity, be concerned with the eradication of poverty through decisive action in partnership with all sectors of civil society and in the context of a multidimensional and integrated approach; the maintenance and strengthening of the institutional arrangements and an environment that will enable people to achieve social development; the promotion of

social integration; and the improvement and strengthening of a framework for national cooperation in a spirit of partnership.

These commitments reaffirmed essentially the commitments of five years ago, when the nations of the world, in the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration, affirmed the human person as the centre of development. At the dawn of the twenty-first century, we are being afforded an excellent opportunity to reaffirm our faith in humankind and to recommit ourselves to the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full and productive employment and the fostering of social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all.

As a small democratic State, the Bahamas shares the hope of many developing countries that this special session will move more comprehensively to direct the political will and the human and financial resources for achieving the noble goals and targets of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. It must concern us all that since the universal commitment of the nations of this earth some five years ago, the plight of the world's poor and the marginalized peoples and nations has not improved.

The Bahamas, as a small country in the Caribbean, notes particularly that the prevailing global economic system and the powerful trading and economic blocs pay little regard to the fragile social and economic nature of developing countries in general and of small nations like the Bahamas in particular when decisions are taken from a myopic perspective.

For several years leading up to the Copenhagen Summit, and particularly since the Summit, the Commonwealth of the Bahamas has endeavoured to enhance and deepen its democracy, encourage the participation of civil society in social development through the formation of strategic social partnerships of Government and critical sections of civil society and enact and institute legislation and practices to ameliorate the social conditions of marginalized and vulnerable sectors of our society.

We enter the third millennium with the lowest employment rate in our history, at 7 per cent. Poverty is, however, multidimensional and cannot be effectively measured by levels of income and wealth alone. As important are the measurements of social involvement, adult literacy, life expectancy, infant mortality and access to safe water, health care and social services.

Therefore, we are improving social welfare programmes, increasing access to affordable housing and providing some quality education and skills training to ever-increasing numbers of Bahamians. We are placing renewed emphasis on the promotion of community support systems. We have sought to benefit poor and marginalized groupings through national insurance and other programmes, which have increased assistance benefits to the elderly, the disabled, children at risk and the unemployed. In particular we note the expansion of the national school lunch programme, which has benefited many marginalized families throughout the Bahamas.

Therefore, there can be no doubt that policies for social development are considerably more effective when they are well informed. In this regard, the 2000 census will be the basis for a study to establish a baseline for poverty in relation to such factors as nutrition, housing and household income to determine the position of all households in the Bahamas.

To ensure fairness and dignity in the labour market and to improve industrial relations for the social advancement of the nation, the Government of the Bahamas has now before its Parliament a package of labour legislation which will go through the legislative process during July and August of this year. This legislation will, inter alia, regulate cooperatives, provide minimum conditions of employment as well as minimum wages, improve health and safety in the workplace and put in place policies and mechanisms for the benefit of trade unions and labour relations.

We aim to foster a society that is safe, stable and just, promote respect for diversity and achieve equity between women and men; and in this vein, it is to be noted that the Speaker of the Parliament, the Chief Justice of the Bahamas, three of the 15 Ministers of Government and one half of the Permanent Secretaries of the ministries are women in the Bahamas.

Over the past years, we have sought to improve the lot of older persons, and in respect of older persons particularly, the Government has followed closely the recommendations emanating from the United Nations celebration of the International Year of Older Persons, and it has put in place a National Committee to develop a comprehensive policy on older persons.

Mr. Khorram (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

In the field of education, the Bahamas has sought the expansion of school facilities and of vocational training and the extension of mandatory school age from 14 years to 16 years.

On the negative side, we have seen an increase in chronic non-communicable diseases, which medical experts attribute to lifestyle choices. In our country, 50 per cent of deaths are the result of strokes, diabetes, injuries and certain cancers. AIDS is the greatest killer of young people between the ages of 15 years and 44 years in our country. Our medical care for AIDS patients is, I believe, among the best in the region. Moreover, special care is afforded to HIV/AIDS patients who are pregnant, reducing the number of children who are born HIV-positive since the programme was first introduced in 1997.

The Nobel Peace Prize recipient, philosopher, theologian and man of God, the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made this profound statement, which can be our guiding light as I conclude:

> "When evil men plot, good men must plan. When evil men burn and bomb, good men must build and bind. When evil men shout ugly words of hatred, good men must commit themselves to the glories of love. Where evil men will seek to perpetuate an unjust status quo, good men must seek to bring into being a real order of justice."

This special session will once again provide the global vision, determination and energy to uplift the nations of the world in general, and my beloved Commonwealth of the Bahamas in particular, to new levels of caring, compassion and empowerment, as we "seek to bring into being a real order of justice".

The Acting President: I now call on His Excellency Mr. Abdul-Nabi Abdulla Al-Shuala, Minister of Labour and Social Affairs of Bahrain.

Mr. Al-Shuala (Bahrain) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is indeed my pleasure to represent the delegation of Bahrain at this important international gathering, and I have the honour to transmit to the Assembly the greetings of His Royal Highness Shaikh Hamad Bin Isa Al-Khalifa, Emir of the State of Bahrain, and his best wishes for the success of this session. It also pleases me, Mr. President, to congratulate you and to wish you every success. On behalf of Bahrain, I would also like to express our appreciation to Mr. Adolf Ogi, President of the Swiss Confederation, for the excellent arrangements made for this session and for the hospitality we have received from the Swiss Government during our presence in this friendly country.

Bahrain is participating in this session with great enthusiasm, fully convinced of the importance of social development for all, particularly human development. We believe that human capital is the main factor for comprehensive development and that the human being is the target as well as the instrument of social and economic development. We have translated this conviction into clear and concrete accomplishments which have been recognized and appreciated by the international community; the annual reports on human development issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have affirmed that Bahrain has occupied first place in human development among Arab and developing countries year after year, and it still occupies a very prominent place among countries of the world in this field in spite of the difficulties and challenges it faces, including its small geographical area, high population density and limited natural and human resources.

The national report of the State of Bahrain presented to this session reflects the results of the programmes of social and economic development and the progress achieved in tackling social issues covered by the Copenhagen documents. The State of Bahrain has significant experience in the field of social development. We have concentrated wholly on health, education, training and creating job opportunities, as well as on expanding the scope of social security coverage and providing various programmes of social care. The State has also emphasized the importance of education and considers education an instrument to enable all citizens to effectively contribute to the building of society.

Health care in Bahrain has reached high standards that exceeded those set by international organizations. We have been able to attain the objectives of the programme of health for all by the year 2000, years before the scheduled dates. The State has also striven to give particular attention to people with special needs, such as the handicapped, the aged, the disabled, juveniles and homeless children. In Bahrain, we consider training an ideal and basic means of giving added value to education and of enabling our

workforce to cope with accelerated technological and industrial progress. The State is trying seriously and assiduously to provide employment opportunities for all citizens, both men and women, and to ensure that all will benefit from economic development projects. We are trying to bring the rate of unemployment down to an acceptable level. Similar and intensive efforts are being made to activate the role of women, to ensure their participation in social development in all its aspects. We are also trying to reinforce the role of women and their contribution to public life and to shaping the future of society. We give particular attention to children because they represent the future hopes and aspirations of the nation. To ensure more effective social participation and integration, we have attempted to expand, with conspicuous success, the basis of the institutions of civil society. We have also tried to expand the role of non-governmental organizations.

The Copenhagen Summit for Social Development, held in 1995, was the climax of a series of world conferences and summits. It was a unique event in the history of the United Nations. For the first time countries met at such a high level to discuss social issues centring on the eradication of poverty, the expansion of productive employment, the reduction of unemployment and the realization of social integration. There is no doubt that the inclusion of these issues in the agenda of the Social Summit is tantamount to a recognition by the international community that they constitute an important challenge to the international family. They are among the preoccupations of the United Nations, and they require a new form of international cooperation.

Now that five years have elapsed since the Copenhagen conference, and as a result of the great transformations that the world has witnessed, brought about by globalization, liberalization of trade and economic restructuring, it has become clear that there are numerous obstacles and challenges that have impeded the implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action in many countries. Therefore, the State of Bahrain joins the international family in calling for a review of progress achieved in carrying out these programmes. Bahrain also calls for intensified efforts and increased international cooperation at various levels and for the mobilization of all capacities of the United Nations in order to formulate a new and comprehensive approach aimed at ensuring serious implementation of all measures likely to promote social development for all and in order to give great worldwide priority to social issues.

We hope that the twenty-first century will witness the establishment of a new humanitarian order in a world free of wars, poverty and unemployment, an order that can overcome deprivation and many other social ills. We would thus be able to step up social development in various countries in order to improve the quality of life for all people, to enable the peoples of the world to live in prosperity in a stable and safe environment and to ensure a better future for coming generations.

Again, I wish this session every success.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ivan Neykov, Minister of Labour and Social Policy of Bulgaria.

Mr. Neykov (Bulgaria) (*spoke in Bulgarian; English text furnished by the delegation*): I am deeply honoured to have the opportunity to address this body on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria. It is also a pleasure for me to take part in the assessment of the achievements registered in the follow-up process to the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development.

In the process of implementation of the Copenhagen final documents, Bulgaria has developed a national programme for social development. This programme was elaborated with the widest participation of representatives of civil society and was broadly discussed at an international conference organized with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Let me dwell for a few minutes on the steps taken by the Bulgarian Government to implement the commitments undertaken at the Copenhagen Summit.

The 1997 Government programme "Bulgaria 2001" envisaged specific measures aimed at preventing the further impoverishment of the population and drastic economic destabilization. A comprehensive legal reform was launched, which included, in the social sphere, the enacting of key legislation and the adoption of new economic principles partnerships.

The Bulgarian Government succeeded in overcoming an unprecedented economic and social

crisis. It achieved political and financial stabilization, thus putting an end to its political isolation and turning it into an area of stability and security in the Balkans.

The Government has also put in place a series of measures to alleviate poverty, including the creation of incentives for individual and collective income-generating activities. These measures were supported by Bulgaria's social partners, with which cooperation agreements on the implementation of the reform and the development of market reform have been reached.

A comprehensive reform of the social security system was initiated by the Government based on the relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions, the European Code of Social Security and the experience of developed countries. The new social security system reflects current social and economic realities and offers realistic solutions for the future. This three-pillar social security system comprises compulsory public social insurance; supplementary compulsory pension insurance; and supplementary voluntary pension insurance.

The Government's social policy has benefited from international assistance. However, additional guarantees for the policies implemented have been provided by the ratification of fundamental ILO conventions and the revised European Social Charter, and by the opening of accession negotiations with the European Union.

With the support of the UNDP office in Sofia, a national anti-poverty plan has been developed that is aimed at, first, preventing the creation of permanent poverty groups based on age, gender or ethnicity, and secondly at stimulating individual economic performance in the fight against poverty.

Bulgaria participated in the Council of Europe's discussions and preparations regarding its contribution to this special session. It fully supports the ideals embodied by the session, whose goal is democratic security on the basis of social justice.

As an associated country to the European Union, Bulgaria has aligned itself with the statement made at this session on behalf of the European Union. We have done so as a country committed to developing social cohesion on the basis of a knowledge-based economy.

Globalization affects a growing number of economic and political processes, as the world is increasingly interconnected in all aspects of life. We have set up emergency task forces to deal with conflicts throughout the world, and the time is now ripe to introduce systems for emergency action against social problems, which are the causes of conflicts. Against this background, and taking into account the fact that sustainable economic development and growth are prerequisites for social progress and protection, last October at the Sofia ILO conference Bulgaria launched an initiative for the establishment of a South-East European council for social and economic cooperation within the context of the Stability Pact.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Mary Banda, Minister for Women, Youth and Children's Affairs of Malawi.

Mrs. Banda (Malawi): It is a great honour for me to participate in this very important conference and to present to the Assembly, on behalf of the Government and people of Malawi, a statement on the efforts we have made and are making towards the development of the social sector since the World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in March 1995. Before I do so, allow me to thank the Government of Switzerland for hosting this very important conference.

Malawi's economy is agriculture-based, with 80 per cent of the labour force working in this sector, which accounts for 62 per cent of the country's total exports. Poverty is rampant in Malawi, with over 60 per cent of the population below the poverty line. There is also a high gender imbalance, with women, who constitute 51 per cent of the population, experiencing extensive socio-economic problems. The poverty situation in Malawi is characterized by low levels of education, gender imbalances, limited access to and control of the means of production, food insecurity, poor access to safe drinking water, high population growth, and so on. This situation has been compounded by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which has been estimated to affect 14 per cent of the population.

Out of the 10 commitments that the World Summit for Social Development adopted in 1995, Malawi singled out five as the most critical for addressing issues related to the social sector development. The five it chose are commitment 1, creation of an enabling environment for social development; commitment 2, eradication of widespread poverty; commitment 6, promotion and attainment of universal and equitable access to health and education;

commitment 8, integrating social goals in adjustment reforms; and commitment 9, mobilization and efficient utilization of resources for social development.

Let me briefly explain the progress that Malawi has achieved under each one of these commitments since the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen.

In creating an enabling environment for social development, the Government of Malawi has, since embracing multiparty democracy in 1994, implemented political and institutional reforms to ensure that its young democracy is safeguarded and protected. In this regard, the Government has created institutions to further this cause, which are: the Anti-Corruption Bureau; the Human Rights Commission; the Law Commission; the Office of the Ombudsman; the Compensation Tribunal; the Electoral Commission; and the Industrial Court Tribunal.

The Government is also reviewing a number of laws to ensure that they are in line with the current political environment. In the same vein, the Government policy of decentralization has included the masses at the grass-roots level in decision-making.

To eradicate widespread poverty, the Government set up the Poverty Alleviation Programme. In 1995, the Government came up with the Policy Framework Paper for Poverty Alleviation. As part of the Poverty Alleviation Programme implementation, the Poverty Monitoring System was launched in November 1996.

The other strategy undertaken in addressing poverty is the setting up of the Malawi Social Action Fund. The Government, with donor assistance, has instituted safety nets as a means for poverty reduction. There are also credit programmes for the rural poor, managed by the Government, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

On health, let me state that indicators in Malawi have remained poor despite substantial inputs. The Malawi Government has therefore instituted the fourth National Health Plan to address reproductive health services, child health and other health services.

Malawi's health plan will cover several policy objectives including implementation of our essential health package, decentralization of health-care services and the introduction and strengthening of cost recovery/user fees.

The National Health Plan aims to seriously address issues related to the HIV/AIDS crisis. In 1999 the State President launched the HIV/AIDS Strategic Framework for the period 2000-2004. The goal of the plan is to reduce the incidence of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases. The Framework addresses the following cross-cutting issues: culture and HIV/AIDS; youth, social change and HIV/AIDS; socio-economic status and HIV/AIDS; despair and hopelessness of the sick; HIV/AIDS care and support; HIV/AIDS and orphans, widows and widowers; HIV prevention; information, education and communication on HIV/AIDS; and voluntary confidential counselling and testing.

The Government's policy on education comprises eight years of formal primary education, four years of secondary and four years of tertiary education. To meet this goal, the following sector reforms have been instituted: the introduction of free primary education; diversification of strategies for expanding access to secondary education; enhancing capacity for teacher training and development; improving capacity for higher education; decentralization of teacher development and support services; and efficient resource utilization.

In a bid to honour national and international obligations to alleviate social exclusion, the Malawi Government has developed various mechanisms that promote human rights and the protection of vulnerable groups. Some of the mechanisms include the creation of the Ministry Responsible for Gender, Youth and Community Services, to ensure that gender imbalances and youth issues are put in sharp focus; the creation of the Ministry Responsible for People with Disabilities in the Office of the President and Cabinet; the Government's ratification of various United Nations conventions, such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the review of all laws that discriminate against women and children; and the establishment of the National Youth Council to work as an arm of Government on youth issues.

The Malawi Government has also made significant strides to mobilize resources for social development. Notable strategies include an increase in budgetary allocation for social services and setting up the Malawi Social Action Fund to provide financing of projects at the grass-roots level.

Let me now dwell briefly on the problems of and future prospects for social sector progress in Malawi. While the Malawi Government has put in place various mechanisms to advance social sector development, there are several problems which are detrimental to the fulfilment of these commitments. Some are notable: the country's indebtedness to international financial institutions has reduced Government's ability to adequately support the social sector; the conditionalities of the structural adjustment programmes have negatively affected the Poverty Alleviation Programme; there is a lack of human and financial capacity to adequately deal with some of the commitments; the ever-increasing health-care needs are putting a lot of strain on scarce resources; the HIV/AIDS epidemic is seriously affecting the productive capacity of the country's labour force; and, finally, employment creation is not growing at the pace required to absorb the excess labour force.

Let me conclude by placing on record that the Malawi Government is fully committed to creating an enabling environment for social progress, poverty eradication, the promotion and attainment of universal high-quality education and health, social integration and the mobilization and efficient utilization of resources for social development.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Marie-Josée Jacobs, Minister of Family and Gender Equity of Luxembourg.

Mrs. Jacobs (Luxembourg) (*spoke in French*): I wish to confirm that my country shares the position expressed from this rostrum by Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

Five years after the Copenhagen Summit, it is clearer than ever that we have to endow the new economic order of the world with a new world social order. Three commitments were entered into at Copenhagen that remain particularly important: first, to combat poverty and social exclusion; secondly, to comply with International Labour Organization minimum standards relating to the fundamental rights of workers, equality of opportunity and the prohibition of child labour; and thirdly, increasing official development assistance at least to the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product and fulfilment of the objective of the 20/20 initiative.

We have to recognize today that those three commitments are far from being fulfilled. The gap between rich and poor is widening. Poverty continues to extend its hold. Unemployment is on the increase, social exclusion marginalizes an increasingly great number of people and armed conflicts are on the rise.

I would not wish to create the impression that I am addressing my remarks particularly to the developing countries; quite the contrary, the developed countries are implicated just as much. Their social development problems may be couched in different terms, but they certainly exist. In Luxembourg, poverty, but particularly social exclusion, has not been eradicated. New forms of development mean new forms of exclusion. In Luxembourg, the Copenhagen Social Summit led to a number of legislative measures and to the creation of a national body to monitor social development. With our social partners, we identified actions to combat unemployment and social exclusion, and we started an active policy of equal opportunity. Within the European Union, Copenhagen made people more aware of the need to promote social development. The social aspect in Europe was neglected for far too long, despite the fact that it represents the best way to bring Europe and its citizens closer together.

In November 1997, under the Presidency of Luxembourg, the European Union set up for the first time a European employment strategy. The Portuguese Presidency followed this up by organizing last March, at Lisbon, a European Council devoted solely to social cohesion. Employment is a major factor of social integration, yet many people are no longer employable and cannot be socially integrated through work. Therefore, supplementary strategies are needed to combat social exclusion.

Employment can only fulfil its integrating role if the criteria of what Juan Somavía called worthy or dignified work are met. The adoption by 175 votes of the 1998 Declaration on minimum social rights was a major step forward, but we have to go further than that. We must officially integrate compliance with social standards into international trade and set up a multinational monitoring procedure that is as binding as possible. This objective calls for a consistent approach by all international organizations, and particularly for collective responsibility among the heads of the agencies at Geneva and elsewhere. Only a coherent and voluntary policy, within a legal framework, can lead towards a world order with a well-performing economy in which positive steps are taken

to combat unemployment and there are effective policies against social exclusion.

If we want social development to be a real prospect for all, the industrial countries must, as agreed at Copenhagen, increase official development assistance. This year Luxembourg achieved the objective of devoting 0.7 per cent of its gross national product to official development assistance. The Government further intends to increase this rate to 1 per cent by the year 2005.

Luxembourg's development cooperation is focused on a small number of countries that have been selected from among those with the lowest human development indicators. This approach enables us to respond to a particular aspiration: to establish real political, social and economic partnerships with our counterparts and to draw up programmes that directly address their problems. Since the most pressing needs are in the social sector, Luxembourg earmarks more than 60 per cent of its development cooperation funds to social programmes, in particular in the areas of basic education, primary health care, the promotion of women and integrated rural development. Thus, we substantially exceed the objective of the 20/20 initiative.

I would also like to recall that almost all of our development cooperation is unconditional, and thus a great deal of it benefits enterprises in our partner countries. Our efforts can be effective only insofar as they are supported by local initiatives.

The principles underlying Luxembourg's activities are respect for democracy, human rights and good governance. To this we add the participation of civil society in the drawing up and implementation of policies, particularly in the social sphere. This involves, ultimately, adhesion to the European social justice model.

Globalization will be whatever we make of it. It is therefore important to refocus economic activity so that it serves human development. This is what we committed ourselves to in Copenhagen. We will be judged on our ability to implement commitments.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Choi Su Hon, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Choi Su Hon (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) (*spoke in Korean; English text provided by the delegation*): I would like, first, to extend warm greetings to Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Namibia and President of the special session. I believe that this session will owe much to his talented diplomatic skills and experience.

I would also like to express deep gratitude to the Swiss Government for having made excellent preparations for the session and for having provided all possible conveniences to the delegations.

It is now five years since the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. During the period under review, the international community has striven to achieve the goals put forward at the World Summit, with the international organizations within the United Nations system and the relevant regional organizations actively joining in these efforts. As a result, social development issues have been brought to the attention of the international community and action-oriented steps have been taken along these lines.

However, problems such as poverty and unemployment, which were the major concern of the Summit, have been aggravated, and overall socio-economic development is faced with serious challenges.

This is attested to by the statistical fact that the number of people throughout the world living in poverty has increased from 1 billion to 1.4 billion in five years, the number of unemployed and underemployed has reached 1 billion, and the external debt of the developing countries has reached $2.5 trillion.

This can be said to be a partial reflection of the adverse aspects of globalization. Globalization brings profits only to the developed countries. It imposes poverty, unemployment and economic subjugation upon developing countries.

Use of force and arbitrary actions in violation of the sovereignty of other countries constitute another factor that hinders socio-economic development. The bombardment of and economic sanctions against sovereign States and various kinds of conflicts not only threaten people's right to existence and bring about

social instability, inequality and crimes, but also have damaging consequences for the socio-economic development of the neighbouring countries and regions.

We are of the view that addressing these challenges should be the main task of the special session.

The people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, who firmly rallied as one around the great leader General Kim Jong Il, are now undertaking a vigorous struggle in the face of manifold difficulties and hardships in order to achieve a higher level of socio-economic development and build a powerful country in the near future.

We are making every effort to overcome the consequences of the several years of natural disasters, while coping with the continued attempts by foreign forces to isolate us and to impose an economic blockade against us. Notwithstanding these circumstances, the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to implement social policies in areas such as free education and free medical care, taking full responsibility for the people's lives.

It is a manifestation of the result of the army-first policy, army-first leadership of the respected General Kim Jong Il that our country, with a relatively small territory and population, is able to continue to introduce social policies for the masses, while firmly defending its sovereignty and facing up to the attempts by forces hostile to our country to isolate and stifle us.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will strive, as ever, to effectuate people-centred social policies at the highest level.

This special session, which is being held at a historic moment, as we enter a new century, bears a heavy responsibility to bring hope and confidence to mankind so as to achieve a peaceful and prosperous new century in which there are no challenges.

Our delegation is of the opinion that in considering possible measures for implementing the Copenhagen Programme of Action particular attention should be paid to the following issues.

First, the international community will have to devote its efforts to establishing an equitable international economic order. The present situation, in which there is a critical disparity between the North and the South in levels of economic development and capabilities, requires not globalization but an equitable international economic order based on the principle of respect for sovereignty, equality and mutual benefit.

Historically, social development is directly linked to economic development, and social problems such as poverty and unemployment can be solved only when sustainable economic development is achieved.

It is the priority task of the developing countries to build independent national economies and strengthen development capabilities. In this regard, international trade and investment policies will have to be reformulated and international financial structures reformed in such a way as to increase preferential treatment and development financing for developing countries. Concrete measures should also be taken to increase international development and cooperation funds, reduce or nullify external debt and introduce unconditional technology transfers.

Secondly, the principle of respect for State sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of others should be strictly adhered to in international relations. The use of force and intervening in the internal affairs of other States in violation of their sovereignty, under the pretext of human rights and humanitarian considerations, should be rejected, since that constitutes a blatant attempt to destroy the principle of respect for State sovereignty enshrined in the United Nations Charter and other international laws.

Thirdly, arbitrary economic sanctions and blockades should be lifted and all disputes resolved through dialogue and negotiation. Reality shows that arbitrary economic sanctions and blockades in all kinds of disputes have serious negative effects on the socio-economic development not only of the target countries but also of neighbouring countries and regions, and threaten the very existence of thousands of people. Arbitrary sanctions and blockades should therefore no longer be allowed. Disputes should be resolved by way of dialogue and negotiation, and their abuse for political purposes should never be condoned.

In order to address such issues properly, all countries must demonstrate a strong resolve to achieve the social development goals put forward at the World Summit. The active involvement of the United Nations and its agencies is particularly required.

The Government and the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will contribute to the efforts of the international community with regard to independence and social development by safeguarding its sovereignty and building a powerful and prosperous country.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Mrs. Shastri Ali, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Social and Community Development of Trinidad and Tobago.

Mrs. Ali (Trinidad and Tobago): I am indeed very grateful to be allowed this opportunity to represent Trinidad and Tobago at this special session of the General Assembly to review the progress made in the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. In 1995, Trinidad and Tobago joined other Governments and pledged to counter the effects of poverty by adopting initiatives which would deliver the objectives of full employment and the fostering of stable, safe and just societies. Five years after Copenhagen, the magnitude of poverty still remains alarming.

There is no greater threat to humanity in the twenty-first century than that of world poverty. It is common to define poverty in purely material terms, as a state of having few or no resources to allow for the acquisition of the most basic needs. Poverty, however, is also a function of several social and cultural factors. It should also be noted that the poverty and deprivation experienced by many countries are the consequences of the unfair economic relationships which exist among countries. It is imperative, therefore, that ample attention be given to this as we address the issue of globalization.

The Millennium Summit in early September will be an appropriate forum for heads of State or Government to pledge their commitment to hasten efforts to achieve the goal of markedly decreasing poverty worldwide.

Despite exogenous international factors which militate against the less powerful, policies and priorities must be adjusted to create the necessary environment to enable countries to compete at the international level. This would mean fair access to enable them to fit into the global economy and cultivate sustainable human development so that the interaction between society and the economic environment can be optimized.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action present an opportunity to effect such development through the pledge to eradicate poverty by seeking to fully integrate all social issues in the development matrix.

In its commitment to support the implementation of the Summit goals, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago immediately sought to institute strategic policies to alleviate problems hindering growth and social development. It adopted an integrated focus in order to ensure that social development objectives are incorporated in all areas of governmental decision-making.

With the support of the United Nations and other developmental partners, programmes have been developed at the national and community levels to broaden the scope of social development issues in favour of vulnerable groups. Attempts have been made to move away from the traditional social welfare approach to one that is more developmental and participatory, and to create a more enabling environment for social development through economic reform. Such reform has been geared towards the stabilization of the economy as a prerequisite to improving the quality of life of our citizens.

In terms of poverty eradication, Trinidad and Tobago has made tremendous strides. A clear indication of our progress has been our high ranking in the United Nations human development index since 1997. One noteworthy endeavour was the establishment in 1997 of the Change Management Unit for Poverty Eradication and Equity Building. This unit is mandated to implement permanent strategies for promoting integration and collaboration among Government agencies as well as to empower poor communities so that they can participate to a greater extent in community life. An innovative and successful programme of this unit was the "adopt a community" programme, which was launched in May 1998. Its main strategy is the creation of a partnership between business organizations and poor communities to improve the quality of life and facilitate the sustainable development of the communities.

In an effort to empower the poor through entrepreneurial activities, a community microcredit system has also been developed which allows for the disbursement of soft loans to needy people through community-based organizations. The Community

Development Fund, which was established in 1996 with assistance from the Inter-American Development Bank, finances community infrastructure and social assistance to communities where 80 per cent of the beneficiaries are in the low-income category.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has placed education at the forefront of its strategies to tackle the problem of poverty.

The expansion of productive employment is a focal point in achieving sustainable development. Trinidad and Tobago's major policy is to increase investments in the non-petroleum sector, with the intention of creating jobs while simultaneously promoting sound labour relations.

The social integration strategies adopted have focused on a participatory approach to ensure that consensus is obtained on major social, economic and environmental issues.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has sought to strengthen political participation and promote transparency and accountability in public life by drafting a Green Paper to highlight the efficiencies of the existing Integrity Commission and the Integrity in Public Life Act, 1987. Other pieces of legislation are also being amended to strengthen human rights and promote non-discrimination, tolerance and mutual respect for human diversity.

There have been obstacles and challenges in the implementation of the strategies, such as the lack of a comprehensive communications strategy, the increase in HIV/AIDS among the young and balancing social equity and economic efficiency. The threat to the stability of the family by domestic violence and rising divorce is also of grave concern.

Greater efforts must be made to continue to improve the lives of our people and to continue to meet the challenges of the effects of globalization on developing countries. This task can be very daunting for individual countries. There is therefore a need for the international community to assist in the process of effectively integrating these countries on equal terms in the international arena by providing the necessary support mechanisms, which include adequate financial resources. It is also important that structural adjustment programmes, when necessary, should comprise a social development component.

I wish to close by reiterating the full support of the Government of Trinidad and Tobago for the Summit goals, for which we have expressed tangible commitment by adopting policies and programmes to eradicate poverty and promote productive employment and social integration. We endorse further actions and initiatives, as required, to implement the 10 commitments adopted in Copenhagen, which will ensure that people are placed at the centre of development.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.